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State Superintendent of Schools

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TO: Members of the State Board of Education

FROM: Nancy S. Grasmick

DATE: April 26, 2011

SUBJECT: Approval of Alternative Governance for School Improvement Proposals (Restructuring Plans) for Wicomico and Prince George's Counties Public Schools

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this action is to approve the alternative governance (AG) proposals for the following schools: Wicomico Middle School in Wicomico County and Hillcrest Heights Elementary, Isaac J. Gourdine Middle, Ridgecrest Elementary, Robert R. Gray Elementary, and DuVal High School in Prince George's County.

BACKGROUND/HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE:

In January 2002, President Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Section 1116 (b)(8)(B) of this Act, in conjunction with COMAR 13A.01.04.07.C(3), places requirements on local education agencies (LEAs) with schools in the five levels of school improvement – Years 1, 2, 3 (corrective action), 4 (restructuring planning), and 5 (restructuring implementation). Years 4 and 5 coincide with Maryland's Differentiated Accountability Pilot as schools are designated "Priority" Comprehensive Needs schools or "Priority" Focused Needs schools. Schools in improvement must target their efforts on content areas and on students who are in greatest need. Once identified as a "Priority" school, the school must develop detailed improvement plans designed to strengthen each subgroup's achievement.

Year 4 Priority Comprehensive Needs and Priority Focused Needs schools are required to select an alternative governance option under NCLB. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) has developed Alternative Governance for School Improvement guidelines to lead schools through this process. Schools are asked to reflect on the action steps taken while in Year 3, involve representative school stakeholders in the planning process, create a School Academic Profile outlining changes to current strategies, and conduct a proactive analysis to identify potential challenges likely to be encountered during the implementation of the Alternative Governance model.

The six schools presenting today, in collaboration with central office officials, parents and school community stakeholders, have spent the last six months assessing school needs and preparing their Alternative Governance for School Improvement Proposals. Local Boards of Education and superintendents reviewed and approved each school's proposal prior to its submittal to the Maryland State Department of Education.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The following schools have submitted Alternative Governance for School Improvement Proposals:

Wicomico County

Wicomico Middle	0510	Option 1 – Replace all or most of the school staff
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Prince George's County

Hillcrest Heights Elementary	0607	Option 1 – Replace all or most of the school staff
Isaac J. Gourdine Middle	0912	Option 1 – Replace all or most of the school staff
Ridgecrest Elementary	0607	Option 1 – Replace all or most of the school staff
Robert R. Gray Elementary	1828	Option 1 – Replace all or most of the school staff
DuVal High School	1409	Option 1 – Replace all or most of the school staff

In addition to selecting Option 1, each school has proposed to implement significant reforms and supporting action steps that they believe will increase student achievement and facilitate the school's exit from school improvement. Reform areas include: Reading/English Achievement, Mathematics/Algebra Achievement, School Culture and School Structure. Sample action steps identified for all student subgroups include:

Wicomico County

Reading and Math Achievement:

- Regularly examining student work as grade level content teams [reading/English/language arts (RELA), science or social studies] to diagnose what students know and still need to learn to reach proficiency on selected state reading objectives. Teachers will then use this knowledge to inform their differentiated instruction and feedback to students.
- Using the results of the examination of student work to differentiate instruction and sharing this data with intervention teachers, special education teachers and unified arts teachers to facilitate their work with students who need additional support to reach proficiency.
- Participating in monthly professional development on topics including the effective use of the 90-minute instructional block; how to manage a differentiated classroom; co-teaching; differentiation strategies; and, strategies on accessing students' cultural capital.

Wicomico Middle School leadership will monitor the above activities by utilizing: data capture sheets summarizing findings from the examination of student work and their progress toward proficiency; walk-throughs and informal and formal administrative observations; artifacts generated through the professional development sessions. In addition, the local Alternative

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Governance Board holds monthly meetings to monitor AG implementation, review student progress, and offer support and resources as appropriate.

Prince George's County

Reading Achievement:

- Implementing collaborative planning/data inquiry through a Small Learning Communities (SLC) structure in order to differentiate instruction through analysis of student work, reflection of instructional strategies and lesson design.
- Implementing project-based learning using technology in all content areas in order to increase mastery of reading and math skills. Selected students will also participate in a pre-AP class that will be implemented into the schedule as an elective for students that demonstrate exceptional ability in the area of reading and mathematics.
- Receiving technical support from MSDE Breakthrough Center in differentiated instruction infusing co-teaching models in reading and math for schools eligible through the Race to the Top Grant.
- Promoting a culture of readers by building on foundational skills that enable students to become proficient or advanced learners and maximize their opportunities to engage with text.

Mathematics Achievement:

- Utilizing a math laboratory in order to expose students to a variety of manipulatives and project-based assignments. Teachers will receive professional development from the math and science department on how to develop interdisciplinary lessons. Teachers will integrate math and science concepts in order for students to make connections.
- Participating in a math core team in which instructional interventions can be identified for at-risk students. The math core team will present strategies to classroom teachers that will enhance their instruction.
- Participating in professional development in content area knowledge for special educators. General educators will participate in instructional strategies for struggling learners to increase the achievement of students with IEPs in grades 3, 4, and 5.

- Looping cohorts of transitioning students by building on acquired mathematical knowledge and prerequisite skills in order to sustain and accelerate learning. Student data notebooks will be maintained and reviewed by teachers in regularly scheduled conferences with students to track performance, foster student accountability and review areas of need.

School Structure and Culture (Prince George's Continued)

- Implementing the Comer School Development Program (SDP) model will begin prior to beginning the 2011-2012 school year through initial training of key staff stakeholders.

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- Revisiting the key components of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) framework to improve school climate and academic performance.
- Creating a School Culture Committee, including administrators, school registrar, attendance secretary and the PBIS team, that will meet weekly to ensure the fidelity and status of protocols used to report on department data, intervention progress, attendance, suspensions, and the implementation of the PBIS framework.
- Inviting parents to participate in an initial meet and greet with the staff. The parents will also have the opportunity to continue to connect with staff through quarterly parent/teacher conferences when picking up the report card and progress report, participation in student celebrations, daily communication through teacher Google sites.

Prince George's will monitor the implementation of these supporting Action Steps through weekly collaborative planning, accountable talk, observations/focus walks, lesson plans and student achievement data. In addition, implementation will be also be monitored by the Site-Based Leadership Team, Area I office, Area Alternative Governance (AG) Board and AG Oversight Board and quarterly through Performance Management Planning Process (PMAPP) meetings.

Earlier this month, teams of MSDE school improvement specialists, along with school improvement experts from local school systems, reviewed the Alternative Governance (AG) for School Improvement proposals from these five schools. As a result of the internal review, the adopted alternative governances are recommended for approval. Full copies of the five AG for School Improvement Proposals are available in the 2011 AG Binder in the Caucus Room.

ACTION:

The State Board of Education is requested to approve the Alternative Governance for School Improvement proposals for the following schools adopting Option 1 – Replace Staff:

Wicomico County

Wicomico Middle 0510 Option 1 – Replace all or most of the school staff

Prince George’s County

Hillcrest Heights Elementary 0607 Option 1 – Replace all or most of the school staff

Isaac J. Gourdine Middle 0912 Option 1 – Replace all or most of the school staff

Ridgecrest Elementary 0607 Option 1 – Replace all or most of the school staff

Robert R. Gray Elementary 1828 Option 1 – Replace all or most of the school staff

DuVal High School 1409 Option 1 – Replace all or most of the school staff

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